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ACTION WHA-00

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INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AMAD-00	A-00	INL-00	EAP-00	UTED-00
	VC-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00
	VCE-00	NEA-00	DCP-00	OIC-00	OIG-00	NIMA-00	PA-00
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DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
HQ USSPACECOM PETERSON AFB CO
USNMR SHAPE BE
WHITE HOUSE WASHDC
ALL CANADIAN POST COLLECTIVE

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STATE FOR WHA/CAN, WHA/PDA
WHITE HOUSE PASS NSC/WEUROPE, NSC/WHA

E.O. 12958: N/A
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CA

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ/PRISONER ABUSE

IRAQ/PRISONER ABUSE

1. "Abu Ghraib's abuses require a wider focus"
The leading Globe and Mail commented (5/8): "U.S.
Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld expressed very well
yesterday his horror and regret at the sadistic actions
of his country's military in an Iraqi prison.
Nonetheless, there was an air of unreality to the
hearings in front of two congressional committees. Mr.
Rumsfeld seemed genuinely baffled at how such 'un-
American' behaviour could occur. Yet it should not be
that hard to believe. Nineteen months ago, a man was
taken out of his jail cell in Brooklyn, N.Y., and
deported - at midnight, and with no chance to plead his
case before a judge - to the Middle East. That man was
Maher Arar of Ottawa.... The difference in Mr. Arar's
case is that he was apprehended at a New York airport.
As a non-citizen on U.S. soil, he was entitled to the

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protection of the U.S. Constitution. Yet the deputy attorney-general of the United States signed off on his deportation.... Perhaps Attorney-General John Ashcroft should have been answering questions beside Mr. Rumsfeld yesterday. On his watch, the U.S. government has created a legal black hole at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for 'enemy combatants.' It has created a similar legal void on U.S. soil for two of its citizens, Yaser Hamdi and Jose Padilla; they have been held without charge and virtually without counsel for two years. For an Iraqi prison to be treated as a pit in which the basest behaviour became possible seems one more natural progression.... The war on terrorism and the liberation of Iraq are just causes. When just causes sink to atrocities, and in doing so head down self-destructive paths, the only answer is to return to first principles: the rule of law, and unflinching openness. A full, honest and public examination of Abu Ghraib is only just beginning."

2. "Donald Rumsfeld should resign now"

The liberal Toronto Star opined (5/9): "When U.S. President George Bush announced he was launching an invasion of Iraq, one of the main reasons he cited for the war, besides searching for weapons of mass destruction, was to end the human rights abuses legendary under the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein. Bush insisted the war was necessary to bring freedom, democracy and human rights to Iraq and, ultimately, to the entire Arab world. Now, Bush is scrambling to find the right way to respond to the fact that American soldiers repeatedly tortured and humiliated Arab prisoners at infamous Abu Ghraib prison, and possibly other jails in Iraq.... Bush has apologized for the abuse, which he called 'abhorrent.' He says the soldiers responsible will be punished. But his words are not enough. They will not erase the anger raging throughout the Arab world, as well as across the United States, for the indignities inflicted upon the prisoners. Nor will they help Bush to retain, let alone attract, other coalition partners in the U.S.-led war in Iraq.... Indeed, responsibility lies at the top, with the secretary of defence, Donald Rumsfeld. He should resign - and if he doesn't, Bush should fire him. As for Bush himself, American voters will decide his fate in the November elections when he tries to win a second term.... As much as anyone, Rumsfeld is responsible for the Iraqi mess. His hard 'go-it-alone' stance on the war scared off allies who could have formed a truly multinational force under the guidance of the United Nations. Also, he has shown poor judgment

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in not informing Bush early about the extent of the abuse... Bush must deal quickly to end this scandal. Failure to do so could result in the demise of his own presidency, and endanger American lives abroad. He should start by dumping Rumsfeld, for it is clear he needs to find new people to head the defence department, leaders who will be able to assure Americans, and Iraqis, that such horrific abuses won't happen again."

3. "Bush finally gets it in Mideast"

Columnist Richard Gwyn suggested in the liberal Toronto Star (5/9) that, "President George W. Bush deserves some credit for apologizing for the treatment of Iraqi

prisoners by some American soldiers. Far more significant than his belated apology was that Bush finally seemed to understand what the issue is actually about. It is not about torture and mistreatment, although as goes without saying, these were totally unacceptable. Instead, the issue that has now stripped away all moral authority from the American presence in Iraq and from Bush's project of implanting democracy there, is about humiliation. It is about sexual degradation. It is about the deliberate stripping away of a helpless person's sense of manhood, of his sense of dignity, of his self-respect. It is about all of this being done to a man by a female soldier on behalf of a country that has been lecturing the Arabs about gender equality.... For the first time, Bush is actually looking at the people there and recognizing that they are a distinctive people with their own culture, their own values, their own dreams, their own fears, their own failings. But it is happening far too late. Too late, that is, for the damage to be repaired. In the Middle East, it is Bush and the U.S. who are now naked. Nothing can hide their faults. Those faults are those of arrogance and of self-love - the certitude of superiority, that's to say, and therefore of the inferiority of everyone else.... Iraq has an infinitude of problems. Saddam reduced it to a brutalized society. But the U.S. is now the problem in Iraq. Sooner or later, it is going to have to cut and run - while, of course, using the United Nations as cover. Since history never proceeds in straight lines, it may be that Bush is about to do the Middle East a great service. A U.S. failure in Iraq, clear and unequivocal, will constitute for Iraqis and for all Arabs a victory of a magnitude they haven't achieved in centuries. When that happens, they will no longer need to feel

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humiliated or helpless. Then they can get on with trying to achieve democracy, and we with trying to win the war on terrorism."

4. "Bushites set tone that led to abuse"

Columnist Linda McQuaig wrote in the liberal Toronto Star (5/9): "...Washington's attitude toward the Iraqi people has been another signal to the troops that Iraqis are fair game. By not even keeping track of the number of Iraqis killed by U.S. forces, Washington has treated Iraqis as dispensable, as little more than a backdrop to its triumphant mission in Iraq. Of course, torture is nothing new. But while we know all the details of Saddam's torture chambers, we know little about what's gone on for decades in the torture chambers of U.S. allies, with Washington's complicity. Don't expect to hear much about that. Instead, expect to hear a deafening chorus of how America doesn't do things like that - from the same people who brought us Guantanamo Bay and the new gloves-off era."

5. "The corruption of war"

Under the sub-heading, "Can anyone be truly surprised that the war in Iraq has descended into torture and cruelty? they always occur in such conflicts," foreign affairs columnist Eric Margolis wrote in the conservative tabloid Ottawa Sun (5/9): "...Americans are reeling in disgust at the torture, abuse and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison by U.S. soldiers. Their revulsion is genuine: Americans are a decent, humane people who believe themselves well above such medieval abominations. But they should not be surprised their soldiers and intelligence agents are using torture and sexual humiliations to break the will of Iraqis to resist American occupation. That is the nature of colonial warfare and so-called 'war of terror.' ... The pictures of gloating U.S. soldiers posing over piled-up, naked Iraqi prisoners recalls Soviet gulag guards who called prisoners 'logs.' They also conjure nightmare images of terrified Jewish prisoners herded by Nazi SS guards, and cowering Bosnian Muslim captives about to be murdered by laughing Serb soldiers. But don't believe the torture and abuse in Iraq was solely the work of a few cretinous hillbillies and miscreants, as the Pentagon is claiming. The process of inflicting pain,

humiliation, and degradation on captives - dehumanizing them - has been perfected by CIA psychologists and psychiatrists. These tortures, based on Israeli

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techniques, were designed more to break Iraqis' will than to elicit information. The sexual humiliations were designed to inflict maximum mental punishment on Muslims. For U.S. occupiers of Iraq, dreaded Abu Ghraib plays the same role it did under Saddam Hussein: Terrifying the population into docility. The U.S. now may hold more Iraqi prisoners - up to 20,000 - than did Saddam's prisons. After last week's revelations from Abu Ghraib, the only people likely to still believe President George Bush's claims to be fighting in Iraq for 'freedom and democracy' will be brain-numbed American TV viewers."

6. "Bush ties himself too closely to Iraq scandal" Edmonton Sun columnist Paul Stanway wrote in the conservative tabloid Ottawa Sun (5/8): "Perhaps I'm missing something, but when did it become necessary for an American president to take personal responsibility for the actions of every individual serving in the U.S. military? George Bush is the U.S. commander-in-chief, so a general responsibility goes with the territory - the sort of responsibility that requires an expression of regret on behalf of the American people and the determination to ensure that those responsible are punished. Which is precisely what Bush did following the publication of photographs showing U.S. troops mistreating Iraqi prisoners. Apart from that, fire somebody if you must. End of story. I'm not sure why Bush felt it necessary to do a mea culpa for Arabic television viewers. I very much doubt if it did anything to change obdurate public opinion in the Arab world and it only served to link the credibility of the Bush administration to the barbarous behaviour of a few soldiers who are about as far removed from the actual control of the commander-in-chief as it's possible to get. Perhaps his handlers thought it was necessary to placate U.S. public opinion, but if Americans now hold their president personally responsible for the actions of all troops, then Bush is already on his way to defeat at the polls in November...."

7. "The buck stops with Bush" Under the sub-heading, "For 18 months, his administration has shown deceit about the illegal, inhumane techniques of U.S. troops," senior writer Dan Gardner held in the nationalist Ottawa Citizen (5/8): "Much has been made of the refusal of U.S. President George W. Bush to demand the resignation of his secretary of defence, Donald Rumsfeld, over the Iraqi prisoner abuse scandal. But on the subject of

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torture, a review of the chronology of the last 18 months suggests President Bush has either lost control of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon, or he has broken a pledge he made to the people of the United States and the world. In either case, it is not Donald Rumsfeld who should resign. It is George W. Bush.... If, as it now appears, it is established that stress-and-duress techniques, or other violations of the Convention Against Torture, are still widespread despite Mr. Bush's statement of June 2003, it will mean one of two things. Either Mr. Bush has lost control over the interrogation practices of the U.S. military and the CIA, or he has broken his solemn pledge to never permit the use of torture or ill treatment. In either case, he has disgraced his office and should resign."

8. "Rumsfeld's dilemma"

The nationalist Ottawa Citizen opined (5/8): "...Those of us who believe that the United States should be a model of liberal enlightenment are angry -- angry at the soldiers who brutalized the prisoners, angry at higher-ups for failing to prevent that abuse, and angry at an enemy whose actions provoked some members of the U.S. military to so debase all that the United States stands for. Osama bin Laden must be laughing in his cave. For he has insisted all along that, despite our wealth and technology, democracies are weak. Islamists

call this the 'spider-web theory': Democracies appear strong, but poke a finger in them and they fall apart.... Mr. Rumsfeld says he would 'resign in a minute' if he could not be effective. If he is unable to restore confidence in his leadership, he may have to do just that."

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